



# Consultations

a newsletter for the diplomatic and consular communities

---

## Customer Satisfaction High

As a part of its continuing program to improve service to the foreign mission community, the Office of Foreign Missions recently undertook a performance measurement satisfaction survey of missions in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The survey, distributed to more than 174 foreign missions, was designed to rate customer satisfaction with services provided by OFM's three primary outreach functions — Diplomatic Motor Vehicles and Accreditation, Diplomatic Tax and Customs, and the Office of Property and Travel. Of the missions surveyed, 55% responded. The results reflect a high level of overall customer satisfaction in the targeted areas.

**Motor Vehicles and Accreditation Unit:** On a scale of 1–5, with 5 being “very satisfied,” DMV got high marks for courtesy and professionalism (81% awarded 4s and 5s). Its updated Customer Service Center was praised for efficient service (less than 1% reported inefficiencies) and high marks were given for phone and in-person assistance.

The information on the DMV Web site was considered useful by its users, although a preference was shown for in-person information. That preference may soon switch as the substance of recent DMV-related diplomatic notes are incorporated into the DMV section of the *Administrator's Guide*. The *Guide*, accessible through the OFM Web site (<http://www.state.gov/OFM>) has been receiving high marks of its own because of its current, up-to-date information content. Soon it will be even better organized, and more user-friendly. Most importantly, all DMV-related diplomatic notes will be incorporated into the Web-based *Guide* in real time — at the time of issuance.

The approval rating of the new diplomatic ID cards was a high 91%, and DMV was also commended for improving the turn-around time for their issuance.

An area requiring improvement related to problems encountered when attempting to obtain vehicle insurance using OFM-issued driver licenses and registrations (40% of those reporting had experienced problems). Increasing outreach by OFM Regional Offices to the insurance sector, along with the improved Web-based Administrative Guide, should help address this concern.

*continued on page 6*

### Inside this issue

Hello Houston!	2
Shipment Requirements	2
Regional News	3
Apply Online	3
Where are You @?	3
New Faces	4
Q&A: Firearms Imports	4
N.Y. Remodels	5
Directory	6



Vol. 5, Number 3  
Fall 2004

# Hello Houston!

The Office of Foreign Missions deployed its newest regional office to Houston a year ago last September, but it is just now opening its permanent office.

A U.S. State Department presence is not new to Houston, both the Passport Office and Diplomatic Security field office have had a home there for some time. The more recent decision to locate a regional OFM office in the city was a logical and timely response to the changing demographics of the foreign diplomatic and consular community in the United States, as well as to Houston's emerging role as a center for international business.

Assessing and obtaining appropriate office space, convenient for its clients, has been a drawn-out process. And, until recently, OFM's newest regional director, *Douglas Dobson*, a 20-year veteran of overseas postings that included Athens and London, has been operating out of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau. Now OFM is pleased to announce the opening of its newest regional office at its permanent location: *Alliance Tower Building, 8701 S. Gessner Drive, Suite 906, Houston, TX 77074-2944*. Contact them by phone at 713-272-2865.

Houston OFM expects to be fully operational within the month. Additional staff is being hired and trained to provide full service to the many consulates and consulates general in the eight-state region. The Office of Foreign Missions would like to express its profound appreciation to *Mr. Jordy Tollett*, President and CEO of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, and to *Ms. Sonia Garza-Monarchi*, the Bureau's Vice President and Executive Director of the Houston International Protocol Alliance, for their hospitality and leadership in promoting international relations in Houston and for providing office space and support during these past months. □

**The hospitality award goes to ...** *Mr. Jordy Tollett*, President and CEO of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, and *Ms. Garza-Monarchi*, the Bureau's Vice President and Executive Director of the Houston International Protocol Alliance, for their support and temporary office space. →

**No more temporary office.** Houston's *Regional Director Doug Dodson* is pictured before the move.



The new OFM Houston Regional Office can be found in the Alliance Tower Building shown here.



## Entry Requirements for Diplomatic Shipments

Foreign missions, international organizations, and their accredited personnel in the United States are established and lucrative clients of the freight-handling industry. The United States is home to roughly 300 diplomatic missions and international organizations with their nearly 15,000 representatives. According to the U.S. Department of State's Office of Foreign Missions (OFM), 31,689 foreign diplomatic and consular shipments arrived at U.S. ports during 2003. Because of these facts, freight-handlers need to be aware of the strict regulations.

Shipments of this type are unique, as are the clearance procedures for their entry into the United States. Shipments belonging to the diplomatic and consular community cannot be processed for customs clearance into the U.S. by procedures used for standard cargo. It is important to understand that, under Federal statute, it is improper for members of the freight-handling industry or shippers to circumvent the particular regulation of these shipments.

Shipments belonging to the foreign diplomatic and consular community require approval from OFM before U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will permit entry into the United States. This inter-agency coordination allows CBP to honor U. S. Government obligations under the Vienna Conventions and the International Organization Immunities Act. All foreign diplomatic or consular shipments, with the exception of properly marked diplomatic or consular pouches and printed matter, require the direct submission to OFM of *Form DS-1504* entitled *Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise*. Following OFM's approval of such requests, CBP will process the shipment's release.

OFM is aware of instances where members of the freight-handling industry have assisted members of the foreign diplomatic and consular community with circumventing the entry requirements for diplomatic and/or consular shipments. It is important for the industry to be aware that, under the Foreign Missions Act (22 U.S. Code Sections 4301 and following), it is unlawful for any diplomatic or consular mission, or any member or dependent thereof, to obtain any customs clearance services in connection with the described ship-



Container shipments like this need special handling for U.S. Customs clearance.

*continued on page 6*



## Regional News



### Presented with pleasure...

OFM's Los Angeles Regional Office, along with the San Francisco and New York Regional Offices, began this summer to process and print their region's diplomatic driver licenses locally. LA Region's SCEP *Josette Velasco* is pictured above presenting Ms. *Ghyslaine Gusting*, Administration Officer for the Consulate General of France, with the first license produced by that office. The license recipient was Ms. Gusting's daughter, Alexandra. Implementation of the local production of diplomatic driver licenses is now complete for all OFM regions shortening application turn-around time significantly.

### Offering Guidance

OFM Miami Regional Office personnel visited Miami's Consulate General of Spain to discuss Department of State programs and review pending issues. Diplomatic Security Miami Field Office special agents also joined the meeting, to answer questions and provide advice. Participants reviewed the Consulate's list of accredited personnel as well as driver license issuances, vehicle registrations, and the properties owned and leased by the Consulate. Visits like this one are a part of OFM Miami's ongoing program to review the staffing of each career consular post and encourage compliance with OFM regulations and requirements.

### Corps at Salt Lake City

Consular officers from the Mexican Consulate along with representatives of 14 of Utah's 20 honorary consulates recently attended a luncheon address by the visiting OFM Regional Director *David Van Valkenburg*. Director Van Valkenburg spoke on the similarities and differences between career and honorary consular officers, the distinct administrative requirements of the Department of State, and on consular privileges, immunities and their limitations. He also discussed the Department of State's outreach to law enforcement relevant to consular notification and access in support of the work of career and honorary consular officers. On-site issue meetings, such as this one, are important to OFM's communication process in serving the consular community. □



### Update:

## Coming Soon—Applications Online

With the cooperation of representatives from 10 local embassies, the Office of Foreign Missions has conducted the initial user testing of the new E-government on-line Application Submission System. During the pilot testing at OFM's facility, the foreign mission administrative officers involved were able to successfully complete electronic test applications for Accreditation, Termination, Motor Vehicle Registration, Driver License and Tax Exemption Cards.

The test results, along with the feedback provided by the participants, are proving extremely valuable in the final stages of development. OFM Systems is incorporating many of the recommendations into the new on-line Application Submission System. A 3-month pilot phase, limited in scope, was initiated in October. Upon its successful completion, all foreign mission administrative officers will be able to conveniently apply for OFM and Protocol services via the Internet. The final, approved documents will then be available for pick-up at their local OFM Office.

In conjunction with its E-government initiative, OFM has been expanding the efficiency of its Regional Offices throughout the United States, adding local production capabilities for many of the service products that OFM and the Office of Protocol provide. This action supports OFM's continuing efforts to reduce the administrative burden on individuals and missions, and to improve its level of client service. The consular community can look forward to an announcement of the Application System's on-line availability to all foreign mission administrative offices in the near future. □

### Where are you @?

More than 1600 members of the diplomatic and consular community are now receiving their issues of *Consultations* by e-mail! Now *Consultations* can be easily distributed among staff members, forwarded as an FYI to a colleague, or filed for quick reference on the computer. **But where are you @?** Each issue a number of addresses are bounced back as undeliverable (particularly hotmail and AOL addresses) and are impossible to trace for correction.

OFM Regional Offices have been asked to confirm the addresses they have on file by pinging each one for confirmation, but ... **We Need Your Help!** ... *Please take just a minute to renew your e-address by sending a quick e-mail to* [Consultations@state.gov](mailto:Consultations@state.gov). Please indicate if your system needs to have mail addressed in a particular way, and also add us to your address book.

As always, hard copies of issues can be requested from your Regional Office, or you can download the issue from the OFM Web site, but for timesaving, up-to-the-minute delivery, you'll want *Consultations* by e-mail! Spread the word to friends and colleagues.

## New Faces ...



**Alicia Marshall** joined the staff of OFM San Francisco as a Foreign Missions Program Specialist this past spring. She is a Foreign Service veteran, having served as a communications specialist at U.S. embassies in Barbados, Havana, Vienna, Tunis, and Moscow. She also formerly served as a District Adjudications Officer with the Immigration and Naturalization service. Ms. Marshall speaks fluent Spanish



**David DiDomizio** has been with the Office of Foreign Missions as a contract employee since 1995. He first served as a Program Manager at the OFM regional office in New York before transferring to the San Francisco Regional Office in 1998. With his 10 years of experience, Mr. DiDomizio is thoroughly familiar with all of the OFM programs. He converted to a direct-hire OFM Foreign Missions Program Specialist in April 2004.

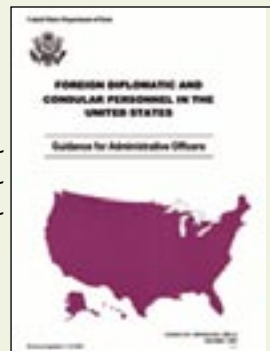


**Tarik Obeidi** joined the team at OFM's Los Angeles Regional Office in April. He has worked for the Department of State in other capacities since January 1997, first in the Bureau of Consular Affairs and then in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. He speaks Arabic and Spanish. His career has included short assignments at American Foreign Service posts in Dubai, Jerusalem, Beirut and Ankara. Now, his detailed knowledge of Los Angeles County, where

he grew up, is an added resource for newly arrived consular clientele. Mr. Obeidi received his Master's Degree in International Service from American University in Washington, D.C. □

### IMPORTANT NEWS:

*The 2004 Administration Guide is only available on-line. Completely revised and updated frequently, you'll find not just policy documents but also the most recent Circular Notes at your fingertips. Here is the material you need to know — bookmark this important page in your computer's Internet browser and reference it often! Type the address directly into your browser. You'll find it at:*  
***<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/27910.pdf>***

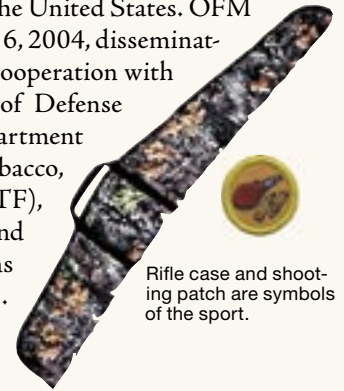


# Q & A

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Firearms Importation: The Rules

The Office of Foreign Missions recently published new guidance detailing the process by which officials of foreign governments, including accredited diplomats, may temporarily import firearms and ammunition into the United States. OFM released a Circular Note on May 6, 2004, disseminating this guidance developed in cooperation with Department of State's Office of Defense Trade Controls (DTC), the Department of Justice's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The following questions and answers address the major points of the process.



Rifle case and shooting patch are symbols of the sport.

**Q. Who monitors importation of firearms and ammunition into the United States by foreign missions and mission personnel?**

**A.** Four offices of the U.S. Government share responsibility. The Department of Justice's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Department of State's Office of Defense Trade Controls (DTC) receive, process, and adjudicate applications from foreign government officials wishing to import firearms. If approved, import authorization is submitted to OFM at the time of application for duty-free customs clearance. Lastly, the importation of firearms must pass inspection by the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) which carefully reviews all provided documentation at the port of entry.

**Q. What are the ways to import arms into the United States?**

**A.** Missions and their personnel may, upon approval by the appropriate office, import firearms accompanying their person or by shipment.

**Q. For what purposes may firearms be imported into the U.S.?**

**A.** Firearms may be temporarily imported for strictly official use by officials of foreign governments who are either (1) accredited to the United States Government or to their government's mission to an international organization having its headquarters in the United States; or (2) en route to or from another country to which such individuals are accredited. This exception applies only to importation of firearms and ammunition by individuals bringing in the firearm for their own official use. Mission personnel may also import firearms for unofficial, legitimate hunting or lawful sporting purposes. Finally, mission personnel may import firearms for unofficial purposes in a non-sporting capacity.

*continued on page 5*



**Q.** What documentation will I need to submit?

**A:** For unofficial hunting and sporting purposes, ATF requires completion of their *Form 6NIA*. With this form, the applicant must show to have either (1) a hunting license or permit lawfully issued by a state of the United States, or (2) in the event the applicant is invited to participate in a qualifying sporting event or trade show, they must show the letter of invitation or registration for the event. For unofficial, non-sporting purposes, the Department of State's *Form DSP-61*, "Application/License for Temporary Import of Unclassified Defense Articles" should be submitted to the DTC along with a letter of support from the affiliated embassy. If importing by shipment in either capacity, the approved application must accompany the Department's *Form DS-1504* "Request for Customs Clearance of Merchandise" for duty-free customs clearance. With imports of firearms for official purposes, no prior documentation is submitted.

**Q.** Will the permission to import allow me to keep or carry firearms anywhere in the United States?

**A:** No. In no way will the importation process exempt mission personnel from complying at all times with applicable state or local laws, or with regulations in all other matters regarding firearms. Accordingly, permission to possess or carry firearms and/or ammunition within the United States *must* be obtained from the appropriate authority of the local jurisdiction in which the mission employee resides or in which he or she proposes to possess or carry such firearms and/or ammunition.

For further clarification of the firearms importation process, OFM suggests reviewing Circular Note No. 04-03, dated May 6, 2004, available on the OFM Web site at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/32437.pdf>

## New York's New Look — Regional Office Renovated

On July 13 the New York Regional Office celebrated the completion of its major renovation project with an open house for the local diplomatic and consular corps, and key contacts from New York City and other government offices. *Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lynwood M. Dent Jr.*, OFM's Deputy Director in Washington, D.C., also joined the celebration.

The renovation was the first since OFM New York moved in March 1992 into its current space. The General Services Administration's New York Regional Office contracted the work with GSA Realty Specialist *Susan Walsh* directing the project. On-site planning and execution was directed by OFM Regional Director *Robert Tatge*, assisted by his local staff, *Helen Bridgett* from the Department's Office of Real Property Management in Washington, and Vornado Office Management's Building Manager *Peter Millard*. Thanks to the dedicated team effort, OFM New York was able to continue to offer full services to its clients throughout the two-month renovation, with minimal disruption.

Today OFM New York is pleased to offer its diplomatic and consular clients a larger, more customer-friendly service center with more attractive surroundings, along with a more flexible and efficient internal office space for staff plus physical security enhancements throughout.

Besides being "better," the New York office staff is now "bigger," having added two new Program Specialists to its staff. *Mary Pat Ehrhard* joins the Regional Office as a specialist in Diplomatic Motor Vehicle issues. Ms. Ehrhard is a former U.S. Air Force officer and has worked in the private sector's telecommunications industry. A graduate of the Air Force Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School, she speaks fluent Spanish. Program Specialist *Luis Nunez* specializes in Tax and Customs issues. His career experience with OFM actually dates back to 1998 when he signed on as a contract employee. Mr. Nunez attended Adelphi University. He served with the Peace Corps in Paraguay and also speaks fluent Spanish. Both are ready to assist clients with their concerns.

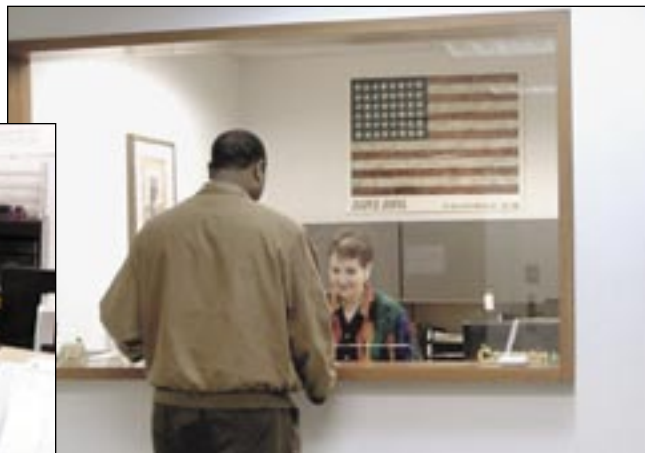
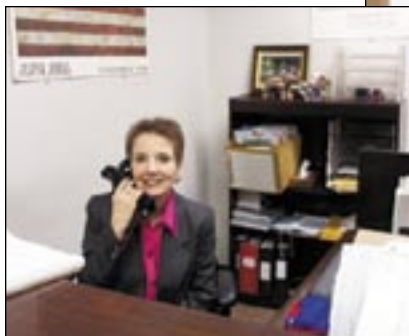
Visit the "new" New York Regional Office at 866 UN Plaza, New York, New York. □



Ms. Mary Pat Ehrhard (above) and her co-worker, Mr. Luis Nunez (below), are new program specialists in the New York Regional Office. Come in and meet them.



**Before and After.** Remodeling complete, the New York Regional Office (rt.) now has a more comfortable and customer-efficient front office compared to the before photo below.

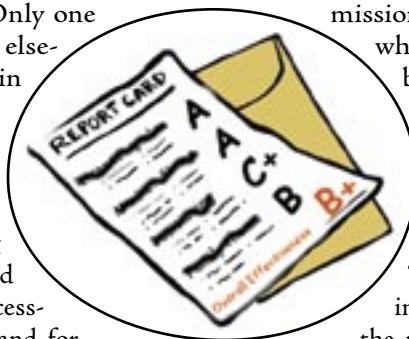


**Property and Travel Unit:** The survey showed that foreign missions especially welcomed OFM's new airport screening courtesies and the information provided regarding that program.

A second interesting finding revealed that more than a quarter of the missions surveyed expressed some interest in a second International Chancery Center, with the same number reporting the possibility of acquiring additional property for chancery use in the next five years. The preferred chancery location continues to be within the District of Columbia. Only one mission indicated they were "very interested" in locating elsewhere and six missions were "somewhat interested" in being located outside the District.

**Diplomatic Tax and service area** had higher around time in issuing new were given for processing reports. The report reflected than 93% for the process within 10 working days, and for specific day regularly set aside for foreign security numbers.

OFM wishes to thank all those responding to the performance survey. The information gathered will greatly help in the Department's drive to provide the best possible customer service to its clients. □



**Customs Unit:** This marks given for the turn-tax exemption cards than exemption card replacement of sea and air shipments the new program designating a mission members to obtain new social

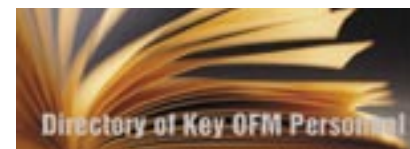
#### Shipments, continued from page 2

ment types by means other than the direct submission of Form DS-1504 to OFM. If members of the diplomatic and consular communities insist that their shipments should be cleared by a different procedure, OFM advises the freight handler to contact OFM for guidance.

In connection with the above rules, the Department of State is now proposing new regulations that would directly affect members of the freight-handling industry. Until now, the effect of the law as described above has applied solely to members of the diplomatic and consular communities and international organizations or dependents. The Department of State is now contemplating extending the requirements to members of the freight-handling industry as well. After these proposed new regulations go into effect, it would become unlawful for members of the freight-handling industry to render any customs clearance services in connection with shipments to members of the diplomatic or consular community by means other than the direct submission of Form DS-1504 to OFM.

By authorization of the Foreign Missions Act, OFM is responsible for regulating many of the activities of foreign missions, certain international organizations, and their members in the United States. Outside of Washington, OFM has regional offices in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York and San Francisco to assist these clients. Members of the freight-handling industry who seek guidance on the current regulations can contact OFM at 202-895-3500. If they have question regarding the proposed new regulation, or wish to comment concerning it, they may contact *OFM Program Officer, Cliff Seagroves* by phone at 202-895-3541.

For more information concerning OFM, visit [www.state.gov/ofm](http://www.state.gov/ofm). □



#### Deputy Assistant Secretary

Lynwood M. Dent  
(202) 647-3417

#### Managing Director, Operations

John R. Arndt  
(202) 895-3594

#### Director, Property and Travel

Richard Massey  
(202) 647-4554

#### Director, Administration

James Doty  
(202) 895-3506

#### Director, Diplomatic Motor Vehicles and Accreditation

Jacqueline Robinson  
(202) 895-3594

#### Director, Diplomatic Tax and Customs

Mark X. Perry  
(202) 895-3594

#### Director, IT Systems

Blair Townsend  
202-895-3579

#### Legal Counsel

Ron Mlotek  
(202) 895-3501

#### Chicago Regional Director

Denise Duclon  
(312) 353-5762

#### Houston Regional Director

Douglas Dobson  
(713) 272-2865

#### Los Angeles Regional Director

David Van Valkenburg  
(310) 235-6292

#### Miami Regional Director

Terry J. Daru  
(305) 442-4943

#### New York Regional Director

Robert Targe  
(212) 826-4500

#### San Francisco Regional Director

Leroy Dal Porto  
(415) 744-2910

#### Director, Diplomatic Security Protective Liaison

Johnny Guy  
(202) 895-3600

#### Protocol: Diplomatic Affairs

Lawrence Dunham  
(202) 647-1985

#### Visa Office: Diplomatic Liaison

(202) 663-3211



#### Consultations

Office of Foreign Missions  
DS/OFM Room 308  
3507 International PL. NW  
Washington, DC 20252-3303

Address Questions and  
Correspondence to:

Consultations  
c/o D. Clay Hays  
Office of Foreign Missions  
3507 International PL., NW  
Washington, DC 20008

To contact any one of the above, e-mail to  
their attention at [OFMquestions@state.gov](mailto:OFMquestions@state.gov)